

Introduction

2007 marked the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery and we hope that this resource manual may play its small part in raising the profile of a great many black people who have contributed to British society both in history and in contemporary Britain. Currently, black history is only formally celebrated in the month of October but we hope that there will be no need for a specific month dedicated to the celebration of black history in the future, as it becomes part of British history throughout the whole year.

Meanwhile, Black History Month is an important opportunity to focus on the contributions black men and women have made to British society throughout history. Sadly, these contributions are generally omitted from the history books used in the classroom and this month provides an occasion to redress the balance and celebrate their lives.

Dr Carter Godwin Woodson has been called the father of Black History Month. He was born on the 19 December 1875 on a small farm in New Canton, Virginia, USA. He founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915, as he wanted to help black historians to research and find the truth about black people. In February 1926, he launched 'Negro History Week' as a national celebration of African heritage. He chose February because the 12 February was Abraham Lincoln's birthday and the 14 February was the accepted birthday of Frederick Douglass, a leading campaigner for the abolition of slavery. By the 1970s, the week was expanded to Black History Month.

In the UK, Black History Month is in October and offers an opportunity to celebrate, recognise and commemorate the history of African people and the significant links between cultures and societies in Africa and the West. It will hopefully encourage a sense of pride in black people's heritage and encourage white people to recognise and value the contributions made by people of African descent. We hope this resource will prove a useful introduction and will inspire the reader to find out more.